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Young Jack Harkaway and the Dervishes of the Nile.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.



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Young Jack Harkaway

AND THE

DERVISHES OF THE NILE.

By **BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,**

Author of "Young Jack Harkaway Fighting the Slave Traders of the Soudan," "Young Jack Harkaway in Cuba," "Young Jack Harkaway and the Boers of the Transvaal," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEARCH FOR THE MAHDI AND HIS FIGHTING DERVISHES.

YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY, Harry Girdwood, the ever green Mole and Monday were encamped near Wady Halfa.

The town had been stricken with pestilence.

The Mahdi, King of the Soudan, had retired to Khartoom on the Nile with his fighting dervishes.

With him was Hassan, the famous slave trader, and they had as a prisoner Clara, the sweetheart of young Jack.

The latter could not rest until he had rescued her.

His old-time foe, Hunston, was also with the Mahdi, and there was plenty of work cut out for young Jack and his companions.

Not that he was afraid of it for a moment.

He loved work, fighting and adventure.

The great master of human nature, Shakespeare, says that the labor we delight in, physics pain.

Meaning thereby that it is a pleasure rather than a sort of toil.

So it was with young Jack.

He had lost the guide who had conducted him as far as the vicinity of Wady Halfa, and had only about a score of fighting men left.

But they were sufficient for his purpose.

He possessed two splendid machine guns, and Mole and Monday had charge of an efficient commissariat.

Twelve camels and a large wagon carried all that the small force wanted.

The wagon was drawn by oxen, and Mole and Monday lived in the middle, where they had made a kind of cave among bags and boxes.

A very comfortable little cabule they had to themselves.

Jack found a new guide in the person of Doola, one of the faithful Pagazi.

A couple of days after his escape from Wady Halfa, Young Jack held a council of war in the camp.

He was seated in the pavilion.

With him were Harry Girdwood, Mole, Monday and Doola.

The last named had just come from a scout in the neighborhood of Wady.

He reported that the town was deserted.

Hundreds of corpses stricken by the plague were to be seen in all parts.

It was a horrible, melancholy city of the dead.

Such wholesale rapid destruction of human life had seldom been seen before.

"If we go to Khartoom to fight the Mahdi and his dervishes," exclaimed Jack, "we shall have to augment our force."

"Where are our soldiers coming from?" asked Harry.

"I don't think we shall get any recruits nearer than Suakin," said Jack.

"If you want someone to go and beat up a hundred, I am a volunteer."

"Very well; do so."

"When shall I go?"

"To-day; do not put it off longer than you can help."

"I will take a camel and ride to Suakin, there to raise a hundred men."

"More if you like."

"Say one hundred and fifty if you can get them," Mole suggested.

"This camp shall be our headquarters," continued Young Jack.

"Where are you going?"

"To the banks of the Nile with Doola, to reconnoiter and see what is going on."

"Beware of the Mahdi!" exclaimed Harry.

"I am not afraid of him."

"You will have Hunston and Hassan to contend with. They are by no means contemptible antagonists."

"We must release Clara from the house of bondage. If we do not I really think she is brave enough to free herself by committing suicide."

"I am sure she would rather do so than become a wife of the Mahdi."

"How many wives has he got?"

"Fifty," answered Doola; "he kills a few off every six months."

"And stocks up again?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sir."

There was a laugh at this, but in reality it was a serious matter.

Clara was in great danger.

It behooved her friends to make an effort on her behalf without delay.

These details being settled, Harry Girdwood started to beat up recruits for their army in Suakin.

Jack and Doola proceeded towards the banks of the Nile, which was no great distance off.

Mole and Monday, much to their satisfaction, were left in charge of the camp.

Here they were sure of comfort and food, which were substantial blessings they prized considerably more than fighting the dervishes.

Three days' journey brought Jack and Doola to that noble, and for so many centuries, mysterious river called the Nile.

It brings down through Central Africa the waters of the great lakes to irrigate Egypt.

The first thing they saw was a steamer moored near the shore.

It was iron clad so as to be able to resist bullets.

On its bow was painted the name "Tolomy," and it evidently belonged to the Mahdi.

They knew that he possessed two steamers.

What was she doing there?

It was impossible for them to even so much as conjecture her destination.

All seemed quiet and still as death on board.

The fires were burning and steam was up.

Going nearer they saw a white man leaning against the smoke stack with a pipe in his mouth.

This is the European's idea of enjoyment, and being of opinion that he was a countryman, they drew nearer.

He stared wonderingly at them as they approached.

Then he picked up a rifle and challenged them.

"Who goes there?" he demanded.

"English traveler on his way to Khartoom; name of Harkaway," replied Jack.

"All's well. This is the Mahdi's slaver, Tolomy, commanded by Hassan, the raider."

"Ha! Say you so?"

"I am Tom Holt, the engineer; taken prisoner a year ago, and unable to get away."

Jack was gradually gaining information of an interesting character.

"I know Hassan," he replied. "Where is he now?"

"Gone a few miles off with his men to raid a village for slavers."

"Are you the only one on board?"

"That's all, Mr. Harkaway," replied Tom Holt. "With the exception of the nigger cook, who's asleep in the galley."

"Can I come on deck and just say a few words to you privately?"

"Certainly; if you like to risk it."

"I will!"

"It makes no difference to me."

Beckoning Doola to follow him, he stepped on the gang-plank.

In two minutes they were standing on the Tolemy.

"I should like to own this vessel, Tom," remarked Young Jack.

"There is nothing to stop you, sir, if you are so inclined; but what's your object in doing that?" was the quick rejoinder from Holt.

"I want to go through Khartoom and up the Nile."

"That's a dangerous game."

"I am raising a small army to fight the Mahdi and his dervishes."

"Terribly brave they are," said Tom Holt; "they'll stand their ground to the last gasp."

"What do you think? Will you throw in your lot with me?" Jack went on.

Tom hesitated.

"I'd dearly love to," he began; "but——"

"There is nothing to hinder you," urged Jack.

"If we get caught it is certain death. I am pretty well off as I am now, and need not run my head into a noose, you know."

"I'll make it worth your while, my boy, to the tune of a thousand pounds."

"Say you so? Then I will chance it."

"Is it a bargain?"

"Done with you," answered Tom.

The steamer by this bold coup practically belonged to Young Jack. It was his as long as he could hold it.

If Hassan, the slave trader, could wrest it from him, he would have to admit that his bold scheme was a failure.

But he had perfect confidence in himself.

This self-consciousness often carries a man on to victory.

It is the craven, shrinking coward half-hearted and slow, who fails.

"Can you run this boat alone?" Jack inquired.

"I've got a Nubian boy below who acts as stoker," replied Tom Holt.

"Start her then; let her go."

Tom unmoored the Tolemy and drew the rope on board.

Then he went below, opened the throttle valve and started up steam.

The tide was rather hard against them.

To Doola was assigned the task of staving an accomplishment in which he was well versed.

He had been an old river pilot.

The Tolemy had high, iron protected bulwarks, so that if attacked, those inside could easily duck their heads and escape the bullets.

Jack soon found out the utility of this.

The Tolemy was laboriously plowing her way up the turbid stream.

All at once a great shouting was heard from the right bank.

That was the one they had just left.

The embarkation had taken place only in the very nick of time.

Hassan and his slavers had come up, bringing with them a couple of dozen captives.

These were young boys and girls.

Furious with rage at the loss of his steamer, he commanded his men to fire in a volley.

There was quite a sentry box of iron nearly encircling the steerer.

This afforded Doola all the protection he required, and from the open space in front of him he guided the steamer up the zigzag reaches of the river.

The Nile wound in and out like a gigantic snake.

Jack stood fearlessly on the bridge, and, though bullets flew past him, he was untouched.

The dervishes and Arabs ran alongside the bank, keeping pace with the steamer.

Now and again, when Jack had an opportunity, he took a steady shot at a man.

As sure as fate the fellow would drop in his tracks and never move again.

Seeing that his aim was unerring, and that they could not injure him, the dervishes were anxious to end the fight.

They retreated as rapidly as they could.

Their peculiar religious cries rang through the Nile valley, and they brandished their weapons threateningly.

As the Tolemy rounded a curve in the river they were soon out of sight.

Going to Doola, Jack said:

"Are you sure you know the river?"

"Undoubtedly," was the reply. "I can steer you right up to Wadelai where Emin Pasha is installed."

"I have heard of him."

"He is independent, and the Mahdi's greatest enemy. He bars the way to the big lakes and the Congo."

"Why does not the Mahdi try to remove him?" asked Jack.

"He has often threatened to do so to my certain knowledge, but always something has turned up to prevent it."

"The Nile runs through Khartoom," said Jack, thoughtfully.

"Yes, effendi," answered Doola.

"What kind of fortifications have we to encounter?"

"Nothing of any importance; a few forts at the side of the Mahdi's palace."

"Are there any guns?"

"A few, but the native gunners don't know how to manage or fire them, and at this time of the day they are generally asleep or playing cards in the guard room."

"We have nothing to fear."

"Not much, excellency. How far you going?"

"Up to Wadelai."

"You know Emin Pasha?"

"I will soon make his acquaintance," replied Jack; "and you can bet we shall be good friends."

"I hope we pass the Mahdi's palace all right."

"Why not?"

"He got another steamer. Tolemy, the Second. Perhaps he follow us."

"Let him; he will get the worst of it."

Saying this, Jack sought the engine room, where he found Tom Holt, his stoker, and the cook.

To them he revealed his plans.

"Going through the city," he exclaimed; "put on steam. We will pass the forts quickly."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Tom.

"Are you well fixed for coal?"

"The bunkers are not half empty, and we have any quantity of cut wood."

"Good! We shan't hunt!"

Going on deck again, Jack saw a distant view of the city of Khartoom.

Its mosques and minarets were gilded by the sun.

His sweetheart, Clara, was confined there.

So near and yet so far!

In spite of the strong current, the Tolemy rapidly approached the city.

Stirring events were at hand.

CHAPTER II.

A BRAVE RESCUE—UP THE NILE—CHASED BY THE MAHDI.

As Hassan, the slave dealer, and trusted ally of the Mahdi, had gone down the river with the Tolemy, her reappearance excited no surprise.

It was supposed that he had made his raid and was coming back with his newly acquired slaves.

Khartoom was reached and entered.

Houses, forts and palaces were built all along the banks of the Nile.

It was here that its course was narrowed.

The stream ran with considerable vigor against the steamer, which forged ahead slowly.

Jack stood on the deck watching everything.

He was close to Doola at the wheel, and all his questions were replied to instantly.

"Is the palace near here?" he asked.

"Little way up on the right hand side," replied Doola.

"Can you tell me if the Mahdi is at home?"

"Yes, sir; flag up; standard on pole; sure sign."

"Is that his steamer alongside the palace stairs which are just being overlapped by the water?"

"That her; Tolemy II. right enough!"

The steamer came close to the palace walls.

Jack thought of how the brave English General Gordon had been massacred there a few years before.

It might be his own fate.

He looked up, and to his surprise saw a young lady standing on a balcony just over his head.

A glance sufficed to show him that it was Clara.

Instantly he took the blow pipe in his hand, and shouted:

"Below!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the answer.

"Stop her! Back her!"

The engines were immediately reversed.

"She's stopped now!" shouted Tom Holt.

"Good enough! Wait for further instructions!"

Tom made reply that he would do so.

The Tolemy was soon carried down close to the palace wall.

By this time Clara had seen and recognized her beloved Jack Harkaway.

Her face flushed; her eyes streamed with tears.

Wildly she stretched out her arms towards him.

"Jack, Jack!" she cried. "Help me. Save me!"

"That is what I am here for, darling," he replied.

"If I only had a ladder."

"We can do without that."

"How?" Clara asked.

"See! I hold out my arms, so! the boat is right beneath the balcony."

"Well!"

"All you have to do is to jump. I will catch you."

Clara stretched herself over the rail of the balcony.

At this moment, a tall stout eunuch, a slave from Nubia, made a snatch at her arm.

She eluded his grasp.

The next instant she had precipitated herself into Jack's arms.

He caught her as neatly as possible.

"Go ahead!" he shouted.

Tom Holt the engineer, heard his words, and the steamer went on its course again.

It was truly a curious meeting, but at the same time it must be admitted that it was a brave bit of business.

So daring was it that the Mahdi could not overlook it.

Word was brought to him instantly of what had happened during the brief interval of repose, which he always allowed himself at the midday hour.

He heard that a white man had captured his steamer from Hassan, and taken away his white slave.

It was too much to bear.

His blood boiled, and calling upon his principal dervishes to accompany him, he embarked on Tolemy, the Second.

Here a disappointment awaited him.

The fires were not lighted, and there was no steam up.

This exasperated him to a great extent.

Nothing would pacify him until the head of the chief engineer was cut off and thrown into the Nile.

At last the boat got under way, and his royal highness, with a numerous staff, went after Young Jack.

It was what the sailors call a stern chase, which is proverbially a long one.

Our hero had obtained at least three hours' start.

Unless some accident happened to his steamer, it would be very difficult to catch him.

With the Mahdi was his famous lieutenant, Osman Digma.

He was intimately acquainted with Hassan, the slaver, and had often been to Suakin in disguise.

A man full of intrigue, he knew everybody and everything that was going on.

"It is Harkaway you have to fight against," he remarked to the Mahdi.

"How do you know that?" asked the king of the Soudan.

"I saw him on the deck of the steamer. No one but he would have dreamt of rescuing your white slave—his sweetheart Clara—in such a daring manner.

"How is this? Allah! he was a prisoner in Wady Halfa. I gave him to Hunston."

"True," said Osman Digma. "He was his slave, and he left him to die of the pest."

"But he must have escaped."

"Certainly, or he would not be here."

They paused and looked at one another in a puzzled way.

All the Soudanese had heard so much about young Jack that they regarded him as a magician.

He had supernatural powers.

At least every one thought so.

Night fell, but the steamer Tolemy the II. still pursued the other, but at reduced speed.

The moon was full, rendering everything distinctly visible.

Hunstan, who was one of the party, joined the Mahdi and Osman Digma.

They asked him what he thought about Harkaway's tendency to be a magician.

Hunston ridiculed the idea.

He said that Harkaway was clever, brave, original, and had more than his share of luck.

That was all.

There was nothing more attached to it.

This explanation, however, did not satisfy his royal highness, the Mahdi.

He was obstinate and stubborn.

Having formed a theory, he adhered to it, and nothing would drive him from it.

The Mahdi never undertook any journey without the company of his head sorcerer.

He had three of them in his confidence, and refused to embark in anything without their advice.

They cast his horoscope and forecast the future for him.

The name of this worthy was Camaralzaman.

When he made his appearance in the stateroom he was told about Harkaway, and ordered to cast a spell around him at once.

With many a mystic rite and muttered cabalistic words, the sorcerer began.

For more than an hour he kept on with his weird incantations.

But we must follow Harkaway.

CHAPTER III.

A BRIEF REST—THE MASKED BATTERY—OFF AGAIN.

ALL night Jack pushed his way up the Nile. It was necessary to have a brief rest in the morning.

Tom Holt wanted it.

So did Doola, for they had been up for hours working, while Jack had slept for a short time.

In times of excitement a man can do very well with from four to six hours' sleep.

One side of the river was fringed with very long reeds which grew out of the water.

Intermingled with this green screen was abundance of willow trees, and something that resembled elders.

It occurred to Jack that in the event of their being followed by the Mahdi, this would make a good halting place.

Accordingly, he had the "Tolemy" run into this shelter, where it floated and was perfectly hidden by foliage.

Yet, thick as this screen was, and impervious to the outside eye, those on board the boat could see onto the river.

While Doola and Tom Holt were enjoying the rest they had so well earned and deserved, Jack was engaged in engineering ideas.

He paced the deck thoughtfully.

There were two cannon, which he pointed so as to be able to fire a broadside.

The stoker was looking after the engine-room.

He had damped down and banked up the fires.

Little Looloo, the cook, was about sixteen years old, and very advanced for his age.

He brought Jack a savory breakfast of reed birds and fried eggs.

There was also something else; an excellent mug of fine Mocha coffee.

After he had partaken of this meal, Looloo exclaimed:

"What you doing with them guns, sir?"

"Making a masked battery," replied Jack.

The rejoinder was more than Looloo could understand.

"You will hab to explain that, boss," he said; "this chile not so intelligent in English as Arabic."

"If I see the Mahdi coming in the other steamer, I intend to fire on him and sink him."

"That is the idea, eh! sah!"

"Now you know all about it. Bring up some more breakfast and inform the young lady in the cabin that I wish to see her, if convenient."

"I've gibben her all she want, boss."

"Send her up and lose no time."

Looloo went on his errand, and for a short time Young Jack was left alone.

During the night Clara had been in a deep sleep.

Her brain was overwrought, and being thoroughly exhausted, she did not wake until quite late.

In a few minutes she joined Young Jack.

Until now they had not had an opportunity of conversing together.

"Oh, Jack!" exclaimed Clara, grasping his hand warmly. "How can I ever thank you for that timely rescue? It was one of the finest things that ever was done."

"So long as you think so I am proud," answered Jack; "don't say too much more."

"Why shouldn't I, when my heart's full."

"Because I should get too proud, and that is not good for a man."

"I don't think you will ever explode on the score of vanity."

"Really, I might if you flatter me and lay it on too thick," answered Jack.

"Let us drop that subject," continued Clara. "I should like to learn where you are going to take me."

"I had an idea of going up to Wadelai and making friends with Emin Pasha, but second considerations are the best," Jack responded.

"What are they?"

"If I can only get the bulge on the Mahdi. I will turn round and go back to our camp near Wady."

"After that—"

"Harry Girdwood has gone to Suakin to raise more men. Hassan has got the best of me so far, but I am hopeful that I shall have a decisive engagement with the dervishes and slave traders of the Soudan before long, in which I shall come off victorious."

"Do you mean to fire on the Mahdi when he is passing by?" inquired Clara.

"What are these cannon arrayed like this for?"

"Hurrah! I see you mean business and am very glad of it. That old wretch who misgoverns the Soudan has insulted me."

She clapped her hands with girlish glee.

Scarcely had she done so than the beat of a steamer's engines was heard coming up the Nile.

"Go below," said Jack.

"Why should I?" asked Clara.

"The Mahdi is coming, and I informed you a few minutes ago I intend to send his ship to the bottom of the river if I can, and him with it."

"Never will I leave you to fight alone," cried the brave girl. "I am not a new woman nor an end of the century girl, but I believe in doing my duty and standing my ground. Give me a rifle."

"You shall not fight."

"I will."

This was decisive and Jack did not attempt to interfere with her intentions any further.

Five minutes elapsed.

Gradually the beat of the engine came nearer.

They seemed to pulse on the very heart.

It was an exceedingly exciting moment.

Tom Holt joined Jack, as did Doola, for the familiar sound had roused them from their slumber.

They helped him depress the guns and take a good aim at the coming steamer.

Through the reeds they could see the Mahdi, Hassan, Hunston and the sorcerer, standing together aft.

Several huge Hippopotami disported themselves in the water.

Occasionally an ugly looking crocodile was to be seen crawling on the land.

Jack had the steamer well covered.

The lighted match was in his hand.

He applied it to the rent and a terrific roar was heard.

The ball penetrated the side of the vessel, which began to fill with water.

Every one on board seemed paralyzed with fear.

"Turn her head and away down stream," cried Jack, quickly.

His orders were rapidly obeyed.

The Tolemy emerged from the rushes and passed by the enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

MADNESS OF THE MAHDI.

ACCORDING to Jack's order the "Tolemy" shot out into the river, rounded the bow of the Mahdi's steamer, amid a storm of bullets, and disappeared down the swiftly-running stream.

Standing on the bridge, Jack derisively waved his solar topec hat in the air.

Then he rounded a curve in the mighty river and was lost to sight.

The Mahdi's boat was so injured by Jack's shot that it began to fill rapidly with water.

There was only one course for the engineer to adopt.

This was to run her on shore.

He did so without any delay.

The Mahdi and his suite landed. The rage of his royal highness was ungovernable.

It was in vain that Hunston and Hassan endeavored to console and restrain him.

He had his tent brought from the stranded steamer and pitched under some trees.

Although he was a disciple of Mahomet, the Mahdi did not refrain from drinking wine.

The merchants who came with their caravans to Khartoom brought him all the delicacies of civilization.

Champagne was his favorite drink.

He had some brought from the steamer, and when he had consumed a bottle his wrath was increased.

Hassan and Hunston were afraid of him.

"That accursed gaiour, Harkaway," he exclaimed, "has stolen my white slave Clara; he has ruined my ship, and I will give ten thousand tomanus for his head!"

"I know his camp," said Hassan, "and will undertake to kill him in seven days."

"You swear that?"

"By Allah!"

"If you fail you shall die! May Sheitan, the prince of evil, fly away with this man Harkaway!"

"Depend upon it, your highness, that he will do so."

"He has cast dirt on my beard!"

"For that he will pay dearly."

"He is the son of a burnt father! How far are we from my imperial city of Khartoom?"

"Not more than fifty miles, your highness," replied Hassan, the slave dealer.

"That will be a long, weary march. By the god of my fathers I am angry!"

"The engineer and the crew of the steamer told me that they will soon pump the water out of the hold and repair her to the entire satisfaction of your highness."

"If they do not I will put them to death!"

The Mahdi was an autocrat.

No one disputed his will.

If he decided that any one was to die the execution took place forthwith.

All at once the Mahdi recollected that his chief astrologer, sorcerer and conjurer, had predicted that he would overtake Harkaway, capture, and kill him within twenty-four hours.

Also that Clara would be in his power.

"He is a liar, and the truth is not in him!" he cried loudly.

"Perhaps his predictions will come true," said Hassan.

"Be not hasty," observed Hunston.

"He shall die the death!" replied the Mahdi.

That meant that the sorcerer was to be bowstrung.

The silken cord would be put around his neck, and he would be strangled to death.

Wherever he was the Mahdi had a body guard of twenty dervishes.

They were outside the tent now.

Each one was armed to the teeth.

Also the executioner was constantly in attendance.

The Mahdi's eyes were inflamed and blood red.

His features were convulsed with rage.

Summoning the captain of the guard, he ordered the astrologer to be brought before him.

This was speedily done.

The unfortunate man knew that he was in disgrace and trembled like a leaf.

He fell on his knees and bowed his head to the ground in an abject manner.

"Vile wretch!" exclaimed the Mahdi; "you have grossly deceived me, and you must pay the penalty. Your life is justly forfeited."

"Mercy—mercy!" shrieked the sorcerer.

"None for you. I will have a holocaust of blood for what has happened."

"The stars in their courses have fought against me."

"Why do you pretend to a knowledge you do not possess?"

"My words will yet come true. Harkaway will shortly be in your power."

The Mahdi stamped his foot with impatience.

He motioned to the executioner to advance.

This he did, holding the silken cord in his hand.

The sorcerer was bound as he knelt, and the cord was put round his neck.

In a moment it was pulled tight at both ends, and he was strangled.

The body was thrown into the river.

Next the Mahdi turned upon Hassan with an insane expression.

"What are you laughing at?" he cried. "By the beard of the prophet, I will make you suffer!"

"My lord," said Hassan, in alarm, "I had no intention of laughing."

"You did, and at me. I swear it! The fate of the sorcerer shall be yours!"

"Pardon me, your highness; you are entirely mistaken."

"Infidel hound, do you dare to contradict me! By the holy Kiaba you shall die! Seize him!"

The executioner grasped the slave dealer by the arm.

Osman Digma and Hunston were both present, but they dared not interfere.

It was well known to them that the body guard were devoted to their royal master.

They attributed divine qualities to him.

For days he would retire to some quiet deserted spot and kneel in prayer.

During this period his subjects believed that he was in communication with the holy prophet and other spirits.

Not a hair of his head would they allow to be touched.

Every one of them was a dervish or fanatic, who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

This city is where the body of Mahomet is confined in a coffin suspended between the earth and the sky.

Those who have been to Mecca are sometimes called Hadjis and reported to be holy.

Hassan was in a terrible state of consternation.

The Mahdi had suddenly gone mad.

There was nothing unusual or extraordinary in this, for he was subject to attacks of insanity.

They did not last long. Sometimes a few hours, at others a few days.

During these intervals of mental incapacity, he committed the most atrocious acts.

It is impossible to say how many innocent persons had been put to death by him.

Hassan knew this, and endeavored to wrest himself free from the grasp of the executioner.

With a sudden jerk, he succeeded in doing so.

Dealing the executioner a heavy blow, he felled him to the ground.

With the fleetness of a hare, he darted out of the tent.

It was his hope to find safety in flight.

But in this expectation he was sadly mistaken, for he had calculated without the guards.

"Cut him down!" roared the Mahdi.

Quick as lightning, twenty scimeters leaped from their scabbards.

The unfortunate slave trader was hemmed in by a circle of gleaming steel.

He found it impossible to break through.

Cut after cut was dealt him, until he fell lifeless in sight of his imperial master.

Hassan was literally hacked to pieces.

A more awful sight than his body presented cannot be imagined.

Osman Digma and Hunston dropped their hands in token of applause.

They were sensible enough not to betray their real feelings.

This was right on their part, for if they had shown disgust, they would have brought the Mahdi's resentment on themselves.

"Great is the Mahdi!" cried Osman Digma; "may his life be prolonged."

"There is but one God. Mahomet is his prophet and the Mahdi is his representative on earth," said Hunston.

The Mahdi waved his hand.

"Leave me. I wish to be alone to pray," he exclaimed. "It is time to commune with the great power behind the universe. Allah, il Allah; there is only one God, and Mahomet is his prophet. I have said it."

Digma and Hunston were only too glad to leave him.

They were afraid that their lives were in danger, for he had put his old friend, Hassan, to a cruel death.

What might he not in his mad rage do to them?

Retiring to the steamer, where the repairs of the necessary description were going on, they sought the seclusion of the grand saloon.

This was fitted up luxuriously.

When they had seated themselves on a divan they began to talk confidentially.

"We are in great peril," said Osman Digma. "I can talk to you because you are a sensible man."

"I am over here for a purpose," replied Hunston.

"That stands to reason."

"I should not have traveled all these miles for nothing. At my age the spirit of adventure is dead."

"What do you live for?"

"Revenge on Young Jack Harkaway."

"Has he done you any wrong?"

"Not particularly; but his father injured me in the past through my brother."

"That must have been years ago."

"No matter. It makes little difference. My poor brother was hounded to his doom and I exist only for vengeance."

"How can I blame you?"

"Nobody can. My disposition is the same," said Osman Digma. "Just now the mad Mahdi would have killed you and I. For years I have been his best general and devoted servant. I have fought against the English and beaten them. I am rather ambitious, and think it is about time that I should be king of the Soudan, for it is my right."

"What will you do with the Mahdi?"

Osman Digma lowered his voice.

He spoke in a whisper.

"Can I trust you?" he said; "if you will help me, I can be of assistance to you against Harkaway; the insolent adventurer has come over here to put down the slave trade and fight our dervishes of the Soudan."

"True. Was such impudence ever heard of?" asked Hunston.

"Never. The son of Sheitan shall be confounded."

"It is about time. If I help you, what will you do?"

"Fight Harkaway to the bitter end."

"Very well. I am with you."

"We will poison the Mahdi to night. To-morrow the steamer will be repaired and made seaworthy."

"You are sure of that?"

"I have it on the assurance of the engineers."

"Will the dervishes stick to you?"

"They all know me," replied Osman. "We have fought together and I have led them to victory. Once the Mahdi is out of the way, I will hoist the standard of the crescent and they will rally round me to a man."

"That is good to hear."

"I know what I am about; if we do not strike out for ourselves before morning we may be dead."

"You know what the Mahdi is."

"None better; he is mad, cruel, vindictive, merciless; a fiend in human shape."

"He cares for no one but himself."

"Exactly. In my pocket I have some datura which is a sure, quick, vegetable poison. Every night the Mahdi takes a sleeping draught."

"You will put the datura in it?"

"Yes, I will administer it myself, and he will never wake again in this world."

"He deserves a bad fate."

"Who knows? He has slain a good many Christian dogs, and he may go to the seventh heaven among the Houris or lovely angels; it is a passport."

"Is that your creed?" inquired Hunston.

"Yes. The red Indian has his happy hunting grounds. You followers of the Nazarine believe in eternal psalm singing at the throne of grace. We think we shall sit at the feet of beautiful women."

"That remains to be proved. The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

"No matter," said Osman Digma; "we are not here to discuss metaphysics. The Mahdi shall die to-night unless you betray my plans."

"That will do me no good. I want to consult my own interests only—nothing more."

"It is arranged."

In a short time the steward brought dinner, to which they sat down with great satisfaction.

It was not an elaborate one. In the tropics you have to kill one hour and cook the next.

There was vegetable soup with extract of meat, Nile fish and fricasseed chicken, cheese and salad, coffee.

Osman Digma was a strict abstainer from wines and spirits, like the rest of his countrymen.

Hunston, however, indulged in some red wine.

After eating they smoked cigars and went to sleep until the cool of the evening.

This and the early morning is the only time when anyone can enjoy life in Africa.

Osman woke up first.

"Now is the fitting opportunity," he muttered.

He searched in his pocket and found a small powder packet containing datura.

It was a subtle but rapid poison.

Hunston was fast asleep.

"I have no use for him at present," he continued. "What I have to do can be done by myself."

It was growing dusk.

A blue haze was hanging over the Nile valley.

Leaving the steamer he made his way to the tent in which he had left the Mahdi.

His personal attendant was standing outside bruising some herbs in a mug.

There were milk and water mixed with the herbs which were supposed to have a soporific effect.

"Salaam, Khan!" exclaimed the attendant.

"May your bed be made in Paradise, Effendi!" replied Osman Digma.

"Your excellency is too kind!"

"Not at all; everybody knows your worth and value. Is his majesty awake?"

"Yes; he has asked for his night draught, and I, as usual, am preparing it."

"Is it ready for him to take?"

"Perfectly; the mint, the cummin and other herbs are amalgamated."

"Let me hold the mug while you inform our royal master that I desire to speak with him, Allee."

"I will do so."

Allee handed him the mug and entered the royal tent as quickly as he could.

The moment his back was turned Osman acted.

He slipped the datura into the glass.

It was odorless and tasteless, but at the same time a dose that would kill.

Simply a few hours had to elapse and the man to whom the fatal drug was administered would be a corpse.

The action was not as painful as that of arsenic or strychnine, but rather resembled that of laudanum.

It produced a slumber from which the imbibor could never awake.

Here was the true water of oblivion.

When the attendant returned, Osman Digma had impregnated the sleeping draught with his fatal drug.

This of course Allee did not know.

"Salaam, Alinkoom," exclaimed Osman.

"Happy be thy end," replied Allee; "thy servant has seen his highness."

"What did he say?"

"He cannot receive you at present; his majesty is in communication with the spirits."

"May his experience be happy."

"To-morrow you will be a welcome guest."

"Allah be praised. I shall only be too glad to see his majesty at any time."

The attendant took the cup from his hands and re-entered the tent.

This satisfied Osman.

He did not wait any longer.

Returning to the steamer, he spoke to Hunston, who was enjoying a cup of pure Mocha coffee without any milk or sugar.

This is the way Orientals drink it, just as the Chinese and Russians drink tea.

"Is the deed done?" asked Hunston.

"The Mahdi will never wake again," replied Osman Digma, with a smile of triumph.

He threw himself on a divan and remained silent.

Hunston did not interrupt him.

They were friends and were about to fight Young Jack Harkaway together.

The night passed.

When the dawn broke they were roused by a great shouting and a beating of drums.

Osman and Hunston had laid down with their clothes on.

They sprang up in a moment when they heard the noise.

"Something has happened," exclaimed Hunston.

"It is nothing to be surprised at," replied Osman. "The Mahdi is dead, as I told you he would be shortly."

"What next?"

"Wait and listen. There is only one leader now and that is I. Look upon me as the king of the Soudan."

"The future Mahdi?"

"No. I am only the general, or fighting man. The Mahdi has a son who will be the next Mahdi. I do not pretend to such a position, but I shall regulate everything."

Abdul, the chief of the bodyguards, beckoned to them as they stood on the deck of the steamer.

Immediately they advanced to meet him.

The rest of the guards, all ferocious and fanatic dervishes, were close behind him.

"The Mahdi is dead," cried the captain. "He went off in a trance during the night. Long live Digma. No one but he can take his place. The dervishes swear allegiance to him."

"This is too much honor and distinction," replied Osman.

"Not more than you deserve, excellency."

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Become King of the Soudan. We have known you for many years, and are well acquainted with your admirable capacity."

"I am proud to accept your offer," said Osman Digma, with a hypocritical smile; "no one on this earth could regret the death of our late esteemed potentate, the Mahdi, as much as I do. His spirit, I hope, is resting."

The dervishes, raising their rifles, presented arms, and with noisy exclamations, welcomed him as their new chief.

Much as they had admired the Mahdi, he was soon forgotten by them.

It was the old, old saying.

"The king is dead! Long live the new king!"

Which means that a fickle populace soon forget the old master to serve the new.

It was necessary to bury the Mahdi where he died, which they did.

A trench was dug and his remains consigned to this extemporized grave without any funeral rites.

It was a melancholy end for a man who had at one time been known as a valiant warrior, and what is more, a splendid strategist.

Everything had happened as Osman had planned it. Nobody had any suspicion of foul play.

Only Hunston was in the possession of the secret.

He was much too discreet to publish it.

The fighting dervishes were behind him and Osman Digma.

After the crude funeral of the Mahdi, Osman made a speech to the men, in which he told them that Khartoom was threatened by Young Jack Harkaway.

It was his openly confessed intention to abolish the slave trade and exterminate the dervishes.

Loud shouts of derision arose.

The ship was ready to go down the River Nile.

All embarked amid great enthusiasm.

Osman Digma was proclaimed the leader of the fighting dervishes, and Hunston was appointed his lieutenant.

In a short time they started and steamed to the famous city of Khartoom.

What would happen next was a mystery.

That Young Jack Harkaway would attack them in force they had little doubt.

And that shortly.

Yet so fanatical were the dervishes of the Soudan that they had little fear.

They believed that they were invincible.

What did they care for a handful of strangers who had chivalrously commenced a crusade against them?

It was the old battle of the Cross and the Crescent over again.

The days of Richard the Lion Heart and Saladin the Saracen.

Two of the bravest of the brave.

In the meantime we must return to Young Jack and his friends at the camp near Wady Halfa.

Osman Digma was proclaimed king of the Soudan for the time.

Hunston was his lieutenant and right hand man.

The fighting dervishes believed in them and were true to their new born allegiance.

Everyone was ready to resist Young Jack Harkaway's expected attack.

Khartoom, on the Nile, was their base of operations.

But it was not Osman Digma's intention to rest there.

He meant to go further afield and meet the enemy in the open country.

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE WITH THE DERVISHES.

DURING the absence of young Jack and Harry Girdwood Mr. Mole and Monday had an exceedingly good time in the camp in their own way.

They played cards, drank, ate fruit, quarreled, made friends, and slept as long as they liked.

There was nothing whatever to worry them.

The few men they had in camp kept guard against any possible enemy.

But no foe appeared to disturb them.

One fine morning Mole and Monday went out for a little walk.

The country was pleasant and the prospect charming.

They had not proceeded far from the camp before they were startled by the roar of a lion.

Overhead were palm trees, and in front a dense undergrowth of briars, vines and flowering shrubs.

It was just the place for a lion's den.

"Look out, Massa Mole," cried Monday. "Some wild beast round heah, for suah."

"What makes you think so?" asked Mole, who had a large, cotton umbrella in his hand.

It was to keep the sun off his head, though he had not opened it yet, as it was early.

The sun was not oppressive at that hour.

"Didn't you heah that roar?" replied Monday.

"No, I did not."

"It was something awful. Never hear anything like it. You must be kind of deaf."

"I am a little bit that way to-day; it takes me so. One of the infirmities of age, you know."

"Me old, too, but not deaf or blind."

"Perhaps you will be some day; don't brag too soon."

The roar was heard again.

There was no doubt that it was a huge, African lion, concealed in the chaparral.

This time the terrifying noise was audible to Mole.

"By Jove, you are right," he said. "I thought you were guying me in your sly way."

"No, sah! Only speak the simple trufe," answered Monday; "there am a lion close by."

"What are we to doabout it?"

"Beat a retreat. Lions bad as dervishes."

"Good. You stop and halloa at him."

"Not if dis chile knows hisself."

"You must, as I am lame. I will start first. It is my privilege. Do not be a coward; bring up the rear," cried Mole.

The professor was in a great state of alarm.

He knew not what to do.

Self-preservation, the first law of nature, massa!" exclaimed Monday.

"Stay by me."

"This coon's off. No foolishness."

Saying this Monday started off on his wild career to the camp as he had threatened.

Mole was left alone.

But as ill luck would have it, his wooden leg got stuck in the sandy soil.

Try as hard as he could he was unable to move.

"Hang it all," he yelled. "What am I to do? That unregenerate Monday has left me to my fate. I shall be the prey of a wild beast."

It really looked as if it were to be so.

The lion roared a third time.

Then he emerged from his lair, his mane bristling with rage and his tail lashing his sides.

He resented the intrusion on his privacy.

"Oh, Lord!" muttered Mole; "the brute looks hungry. He will make a meal of me and forget to say grace before meat. What will become of me?"

That was a question difficult to answer.

The lion was truly a noble beast, not more than two years old at the most.

He advanced leisurely to the learned professor.

"Get away, you brute! I will crucify you!" yelled Mr. Mole.

The lion paused.

Wild beasts are unused to the sound of the human voice and it impresses them.

Seeing his advantage, Mole improved upon it.

He did not swear.

On the contrary he went into higher mathematics.

"I will sling Euclid at him," he said to himself, "and show him the advantage of being well educated."

He glared fiercely at the lion.

"Go, you isoceles triangle!" he cried. "Be off, you scalene creature, you parallelogram, you cube root, you equilateral beast!"

This language astonished the lion.

Never before had he heard anything like it.

What did it mean?

To complete his discomfiture Mole opened his umbrella and brandished it.

This was too much for the lion.

He slunk round and turned tail to run.

Mole now bethought himself of his revolver, which he promptly drew.

"I will give him a Parthian shot," he said.

He fired.

It was more by accident than skill that he hit the retreating lion in a vital spot.

The gigantic brute was shot through the heart and rolled over in his death agony.

"Hurrah!" cried Mole, delightedly. "That's one to me! The old man can do it!"

By a great effort he wrenched his cork leg out of the encircling sand.

Another bullet in the head effectually settled the dying lion.

Taking his knife from his belt Mole proceeded to skin the monarch of the forest.

This was easily done while the body was warm.

Dragging the skin over the grass he dried it as well as he could.

Then he put it over his shoulders and returned to camp in triumph.

Monday was talking to one of the native soldiers.

"You nebber see Massa Mole again," he said; "he done gone been eaten up by a big lion; me fought for him as long as I could; now he gone; me hear his bones go crunch in de mouf ob de lion."

Mole stepped forward.

"Stop your lies!" he cried.

Monday started.

"Golly!" he shouted; "here am de ole man with de lion on him back!"

"You left me to my fate, you base slave!" said Mole. "But I conquered."

"Me no coward."

"I say and declare you are!"

"Me nebber speak to people I'se not acquainted with."

"What do you pretend?"

"Did I ebber see that lion in my life before, sah? How should we be acquainted? I'se too proud to converse with strangers, Massa Mole."

"Monday, you are a rank humbug, and I tell you so to your face."

"You's a right to your own opinions."

"And I shall stick to them."

"It pleases you and don't hurt me least little bit."

"Didn't you abandon me?"

"I was tired and wanted to go home."

Mole made a contemptuous gesture.

He was about to reply in an angry tone, when the sound of a horse was heard.

A dozen natives appeared.

They had three heavily laden camels with them, and an elderly gray-bearded man was at their head.

It was a small trading caravan.

These are frequently seen in different parts of the Soudan, because there are no railroads.

All the commerce is done on the backs of camels by enterprising merchants, many of whom are of Jewish origin.

No matter where a man goes, he finds one of God's chosen people.

The scattered tribes of Israel are ubiquitous, and always more or less successful in business.

They control the money markets of the world.

Truly a wonderful nation, and always good citizens; well behaved and careful of the poor of their own race, wherever they may be found.

"All hail," exclaimed the old man, greeting.

"Who are you?" asked Mole.

"The Sheik Ibrahim, a simple and peaceful trader. I have come from Cairo across the great desert to Khartoom, and am on my way to Suakin with merchandise."

"You are welcome to what poor hospitality we can give you."

"Massletob. Good luck to you. I am a Jew, no matter if you are a Christian."

"That makes no difference."

"May I venture to inquire what brings you here?"

"My party and I are fighting the dervishes; trying to abolish the slave trade and be quixotic generally."

"Who is your chief?" asked the sheik.

"Harkaway Pasha."

"Hal" exclaimed Ibrahim. "I have heard of him at Khartoom."

"Indeed!"

"I can give you great news."

"What about or whom?"

"The great man Harkaway. He is young, they say, but holy Moses, what a warrior—what a genius. I am told that he has killed Hassan, the great slave-raider, and also the Mahdi."

This was the report in Khartoom.

News flies speedily by means of runners or messengers.

Sheik Ibrahim did not know the whole truth; he only reported what he had heard in the bazaar where he sold and bought his goods.

"Hassan dead!" cried Mole. "The Mahdi no more."

"Such is the rumor. The fight took place on the Nile, near Wadelal. Harkaway had a steamer. He rescued a white female slave named Clara. The Mahdi pursued in another steamer. There was a battle."

"Hurrah for young Jack," exclaimed Mole.

"Mast' Jack can do it all de time. Yah, yah," grinned Monday.

"Shut up your big mouth, you black coward," said the professor.

"My mouf good enough for you, sah."

"Not by a long way it isn't."

"I say it is."

"Will you hold your tongue? I want you to quit right away. Let the sheik speak."

Ibrahim resumed his conversation.

"Harkaway Pasha began to cannonade the forts and the palace," said the old sheik. "Unable to return or resist the bombardment, the defenders surrendered without firing a shot."

"He scored another victory—bravo!" cried Mole.

"Yes, he was victorious along the line."

"I am proud of my old friend and pupil."

"He plundered the jewel house in the palace, taking away with him all that was valuable."

"I have heard that the Mahdi had some wonderful diamonds and large pearls."

"It is true."

"Who is the ruler of the Soudan now?" inquired Mole curiously.

"Osman Digma, a general who has seen much fighting," answered Ibrahim. "With him is an English or American man."

"His name?"

"Hunston or Munson—some name like that. I forget," said the sheik.

"As I expected."

"Do you know him?"

"For years we have been acquainted; he is a great enemy of Harkaway."

"They say the Soudanese lost three hundred killed in the battle."

"Prodigious!" ejaculated Mole.

This is how news travels in the Soudan, its import growing at every stopping place and each repetition.

There was not a word of truth in the report that Jack had looted the palace.

He had not stolen any jewels, for the simple reason that the late Mahdi had none to steal.

After resting and taking some refreshment offered him by Mole, the sheik ordered his drivers to wake the camels up.

These patient, enduring, long-suffering animals were kneeling on the sand.

There was a peculiar, but intelligent expression in their dark blue eyes.

"I am going to leave you now," exclaimed the sheik, "and I feel glad to have met you, Mr.—. I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Mole Pasha. Known all over the world."

"Is that so?"

"My deeds of daring are chronicled in many a book and story. Do you read?"

"I have not much time for it. My business is that of a merchant. I shell my goods. What more you want, eh?"

"I am the great Mole, the magnificent Mole, who has eclipsed any one of Homer's heroes in the seize of Troy."

The Sheik Ibrahim grasped his hand with apparent cordiality.

"Let me unpack one of the camels," he exclaimed. "I will sell the great Mole some nice summer clothing. Baxter street price; fit you like the paper on the wall. All good goods. Warranted not to shrink in a shower of rain."

"It strikes me you have been in New York and know some of the tricks of the trade."

"I am well acquainted anywhere you like to name. Have you got any money, or are you playing it low down on me, Mister Mole?"

"By no means. If you have a diamond ring to dispose of I will buy it at a price."

"Any priesh you like. Ve vill trade. Come, I show you."

Ibrahim took up a box which had been on the back of one of the camels.

In it was a collection and assortment of the commonest jewelry the mind of man can possibly imagine.

It was made in Birmingham, and good enough to sell to the Soudanese at a thousand per cent. profit.

The supposed gold was brass, and the diamonds were nothing but cut glass.

His goods were a transparent fraud.

He could talk well. His speech was persuasive, but he had a more potent argument.

Whenever he was trading he produced a bottle of the vilest intoxicating kind of rum.

Some was offered to Mole, while a dicker was going on over a supposed valuable ring.

Mole bought it for fifty dollars and Monday was induced to invest a similar sum in a worthless watch, the works of which only went spasmodically, when stirred up with the prongs of a fork.

It had no more idea of keeping time than a train on a badly regulated railroad.

Monday was very proud of his watch, which he hung round his neck, attached to a long brass chain.

"That suits you very well," remarked Ibrahim, eying him admiringly.

"It is quite the style," replied Monday, whose weak point was vanity.

"Now ve do another pargain. I shell you a coat and hat with plume which was the property once of an admiral in the British navy. He was killed by the Ashantees and I puy his uniform."

Monday jumped at the offer.

He thought he would look well dressed in the uniform of an admiral.

The price he paid for it was exorbitant, but he did not begrudge it when he looked at himself in a small hand mirror with which Ibrahim presented him.

As Monday strutted about, proud as a peacock, Mole became jealous and envious of the fine appearance he presented.

The old sheik had another suit to sell which had been cast off by a general.

Mole bought this and put it on; an old sword was included in the bargain, which the professor strapped to his side.

He thought that he looked every inch a soldier.

Ibrahim now took his leave with his camels and drivers and proceeded on his way to Suakin.

From thence he intended to travel to Suez and Port Said.

He had not been gone long before Young Jack, Doola and Tom Holt made their appearance with Clara.

They were highly jubilant at the success which had attended their venture.

It was impossible to resist a smile at the fantastic costumes of Mole and Monday.

Explanations followed.

When Mole told Jack about Ibrahim's story, the latter knew there must be some foundation of fact in it.

Turning to Doola, he said:

"If you feel equal to the exertion I should like you to go to Khartoom and find out what has really happened and is going on."

"In half an hour I will start," replied Doola.

"I don't want to impose on your strength."

"That is equal to the exertion."

Jack paced up and down, plunged in deep thought.

He came to the conclusion that the Mahdi had either been poisoned or had committed suicide.

If Osman Digma and Hunston were acting together he had to fear the worst from the dervishes.

They would fight him like tigers.

He had scuttled the steamer, which was lying at the bottom of the Nile never to be of use to anyone again.

It would be best, he thought, to await the coming of the dervishes where he was.

If he entrenched himself he might be able to ward off the attack of Osman Digma and Hunston.

This might be reasonably expected within forty-eight hours, if not sooner.

Doola was as good as his word. After taking some refreshment he went out on a scout. The importance of his mission could not be over estimated. He fully understood it, and was prepared for any emergency that might occur.

There was one advantage in his favor. He knew every yard of the country and had friends in the city of Khartoom.

Taking Tom Holt one side, Jack said: "I want you to set the men to work to dig rifle pits and throw up sand bastions all round the camp."

"We can fortify in a short time," replied Tom, "but we have only a handful of soldiers."

"Good material, though."

"Oh, yes! I do not deny that. These black fellows will fight well if they are paid for it."

"I am expecting reinforcements every hour," said Jack.

"Where from?"

"Suakin. My friend, Harry Girdwood, has gone there to enlist one hundred mercenaries."

"That is better. Force must be met by force," answered Tom Holt.

"You will stand by me?"

"To the last. I have taken a liking to you before you came on the scene. I was Hassan's slave on the steamer. Now I am a free man."

"How did the rascal get hold of you?"

"I was an engineer on board a trading vessel in the Red Sea, going from Africa to Arabia. Hassan had a slave dhow. He fought and captured us. I was one of the few saved, and have been in captivity for twelve months."

"It is a change for you."

"And a very welcome one, I can assure you, sir. I wish I was back again in London where I was born."

The sound of tom-toms or native drums, was borne towards them on the breeze.

It heralded the coming of some force.

At first young Jack thought it was the dervishes.

He ordered his men to stand to their arms.

This they promptly did with pluck and discipline.

Mr. Mole and Monday suddenly vanished.

In spite of their gorgeous uniforms they had no inclination for fighting.

Their cave in the commissariat wagon afforded them safety and seclusion.

This they sought without any delay.

They might as well have saved themselves the trouble, however, for no enemy was near.

It was only Harry Girdwood returning with the mercenaries from Snakin.

They were fine fellows. Most of them Hadendowahs, full of fight, hating the slave traders, and ready to do battle against the dervishes.

The late Mahdi and his men were not popular in that part of the Soudan.

They had committed too many atrocities against the harmless tribes. Nor was Osman Digma liked any better.

Harry marched into camp, bronzed by the sun and covered with dust.

By his side was a tall, lanky Irishman of gentlemanly appearance.

Behind came the Pagazi Harry had enlisted, marching in formation of fours.

It was a long, snake-like line of as fine a body of men as you would wish to see.

They were all naked with the exception of a loin cloth made of matting.

Their muscular development would have done credit to a well-trained prize fighter, or a member of an athletic club in some big city.

As they filed into the camp, they broke their formation and dispersed.

Several shook hands with some of the old guard, whom they had met on previous occasions.

"Welcome, Harry," exclaimed Jack. "I have a lot to tell you."

"I guess while I have been gone, you have not been idle," replied Girdwood.

"Not for a moment. You will be surprised when you hear all I have to say."

"My career has been uneventful. Here are the men you required. To get them has been all I had to do; but before we go any further, permit me to introduce to you my friend, Captain Murphy, a Limerick man, and soldier of fortune. He was originally in the 42nd Highlanders, familiarly known as the Black Watch."

Jack and the Irishman shook hands.

"Bedad, Harkaway," exclaimed Captain Murphy, "you're the lad I've been waiting to meet. Wherever there is any fighting, I'm there."

"You will have all you want before long," replied Jack.

"That's gay."

"May I ask what you came to Suakin for?"

"I was a private in the Black Watch, although my father is a perfect gentleman. I had a row in Cairo, where we were quartered, with the sergeant of my company. I deserted, drifted to Port Said, and so on to Suakin."

"I see."

"When I heard Mister Girdwood was recruiting, I offered my ser-

vices and was accepted. You'll find me a good drill and an excellent all round man."

"We expect an assault."

"It will be a gorgeous opportunity for me to show my fine qualities. Trust me, my bhoy."

"Mr. Murphy, you are one of us," continued Jack.

"Call me captain. If it isn't me rank, it pleases me vanity. We'll bate these niggers and where I go next, sorra one av me knows."

"Where would you like to go?"

"What I'd like and what I can, are two different things altogether," replied Captain Murphy, as he styled himself.

"Speak out."

"There's some life and excitement to be seen in Armenia, where the haythen Turks are oppressing the Christian community something horrible."

"I have heard of the Armenian atrocities."

"Who has not?"

"I have put down the slave trade to some extent, through the deaths of Hassan and the Mahdi," remarked Jack, "and when I have taught the dervishes a lesson I shall be free to go anywhere."

"Come to Armenia with me and you'll see fun; I've a half brother there who is a consul," said Murphy.

"I'll consider the matter. Excuse me while I relate to Girdwood what I have been doing," Jack replied.

He did so, and Harry was highly elated at what he heard.

"You have done well!" he exclaimed.

"And we will do better," chimed in Murphy. "By the Rock of Cashel, we'll knock spots out of the haythens!"

Seeing that there was nothing to fear, Mole and Monday thought they would emerge from their place of security.

"Was volen zee?" asked Monday.

"Schnaps taken," replied Mole.

"Sehr gut," continued Monday, handing him a bottle.

There was a gurgling sound and a deep sigh of content and satisfaction.

"If there is one thing I like better than another in this world," he exclaimed, "it is Schiedam. Harry Girdwood has come in with the reinforcements; there is no occasion for my presence; I will lie here."

"Jus' as you like, sah," replied Monday. "We two ole men; the others young. I reckon I lie, too."

"Go on parade!"

"Not if I know it; I'se one of the boys and enjoy lazing as well as any one else."

"You are no good; all you can do is to open your wide mouth and grin like a monkey."

"Don't call me down any more, sah!"

"What would be the consequence if I did?"

"I'd sit on you for all you are worth. You little, thin man! Me short and big. Plenty fat."

Mole made no further remark. Monday was smoking a cigar. It dropped from his hand as his eyes closed.

Without his knowing it the cheroot set fire to the straw on which they were lying.

A dense smoke arose.

It threatened to suffocate them.

"Golly!" cried Monday, jumping up; "what's de matter now with eberyting?"

He roused Mole with a kick in the ribs.

"Hello! what you doing, you lump of coal?" asked Mole.

"Git up; de house am on fire."

"Then you've done it."

They both scrambled out of the wagon.

Young Jack saw the smoke, and guessing there was something wrong, took a bucket of water in his hand.

Harry Girdwood and Murphy followed his example.

The water was poured on the straw and the fire quickly extinguished.

"What are you two loafers up to?" asked Jack. "Do you want to destroy all our stores?"

"I will tell you, Jack," answered Mole; "finding he cannot get the best of me any other way, Monday tried to set fire to me."

"Dat am a falsehood," retorted Monday, hotly.

"If it is, you tell it, not me."

"I despise you, Mr. Mole, and nebber travel with you no more. You mean, white trash, dat's all."

"Really! I should feel sorry to be what you are."

Jack interposed:

"Leave off nagging, you two!" he cried. "It is six of one and half a dozen of the other. Brace yourselves up and prepare to meet the foe. They may be here before we expect them."

"Jack," replied Mole, "you are young and headstrong. What have you done, compared with me. Have I not slain my thousands in my time, like Sampson?"

"Perhaps, but with the same weapon?"

"What is that?"

"The jawbone of an ass."

"I didn't expect this of you; it is an insult."

"Take it as such."

Turning on his heel, Jack with Harry went to see how the fortifications were progressing.

Much had been done in a short time.

All at once they were startled by a shot from an outlying picket.

At the same moment Doola came running into camp.

"The enemy are close at hand!" he exclaimed. "Osman Digma and Hunston are coming with three hundred men. It is a large impi of dervishes."

"Have you seen them?" asked Jack.

"I met them and hastened back to apprise you of their coming," replied Doola; "the sentinels are already engaged."

It was a critical moment.

The odds were at least two to one against them.

Shot followed shot.

Mole got hold of Monday's arm.

"Let us go where the woodbine twineth," he whispered. "Those fire eaters must fight it out between themselves. What have we to do with it?"

"What um goin' do now, sah?" asked Monday.

"Crawl under the wagon. We shall be safe there. These lumps of lead have a strange way of hitting a man in a vital part, and I'm too old to pose as a hero."

"Same with me, sah. Gib de ole boys a chance."

"Longfellow says: 'Tell me not in mournful numbers, life is but an empty dream, life is earnest, life is real.' Let us get under the wagon."

"Best fight first, sah."

"My fighting days are over," answered Mole; "but when the battle is over, I will say what I have done."

"No one believe you."

"They can't contradict me, as I shall not be seen."

Mole discreetly crawled under the wagon and Monday did so too.

Neither of them wanted to fight.

In a few minutes a terrible fusillade was heard.

The battle had begun.

With a fanatical fury the dervishes, under Osman Digma and Hunston, rushed at the entrenchments which had been so hastily thrown up.

They seemed to court death.

Bad as he was, Hunston had bravery in him.

But he and Osman Digma met with a determined resistance which they had not expected.

Courageous as the dervishes were, they were driven back by a storm of bullets.

"On—on!" shouted Hunston. "Death to the Christian dogs! Send them to the bottomless pit!"

The dervishes rushed on.

Jack stood in the breach, sword in hand.

Hunston met him.

"At last we have come together!" he cried. "Let us see who is the best man!"

"That is what I have been waiting for," Jack replied.

Their swords crossed.

Jack had the best of the old man, for with a thrust in carte he pierced him through the chest.

With a hollow moan Hunston reeled into the arms of a stalwart dervish.

He carried the wounded man to the rear.

Osman Digma directed the attack, but, as was his wont, did not expose himself more than he could help.

Under a withering fire the dervishes were obliged to fall back in confusion.

They were pursued and shot down like a lot of flying coyotes on the prairie.

Harry Girdwood was by Jack's side.

A parting shot struck him in the leg and he fell with a groan. There was no time to attend to him.

Murphy headed a sortie which Jack joined, and they chased the dervishes for a mile.

They were fleet of foot and soon distanced their pursuers, finally finding a hiding-place in a wood.

Two thirds of their number had been killed or wounded.

It was a disastrous defeat from which they could not recover for a long time.

Hassan, the slave trader, was dead, so was the Mahdi, and Osman Digma had lost his best men.

Jack, under great difficulties, had succeeded in all he had undertaken.

He thought that Hunston was wounded so that he would die.

The dead were hastily buried in large pits dug in the sandy soil.

There was great rejoicing in the camp that night, after the wounded had been attended to by Murphy, who had a little surgical knowledge.

There were very few in number, because the Soudanese were not in the habit of giving quarter.

If they saw a wounded man they clubbed, shot or bayoneted him.

Harry Girdwood had a wound from a bullet which went through his thigh.

Fortunately it missed the femoral artery and the bone; a tourniquet was applied, the bleeding stopped, and he slept.

Jack had only lost forty men out of his small force of a hundred and thirty.

Rum was served to the victorious survivors, and they sang songs round their camp fires, which they were obliged to light owing to the chilliness of the nights.

Young Jack, Tom Holt, Murphy, Mole and Monday, held high revelry in the pavilion.

"Where were you, sir," asked Jack, addressing the professor, "during the conflict?"

"I fought sideways," replied Mole. "That is to say, while you were in the front, I was turning the enemy's flank."

"It is curious that I did not see you."

"That I cannot help."

"Try and explain the situation."

"Certainly not. Is not my word sufficient?"

Monday began to laugh.

"Yah, yah!" he said. "I have to smile. Massa Mole do all his fightin' under de wagon."

"You idiotic donkey," cried Mole; "where were you?"

"Alongside you all de time, boss!"

There was a roar of laughter at this, in which Mole and Monday could not help joining.

They were two self confessed cowards, but their age and previous performances in the field excused them.

It was only just that it should be so.

When men get old they cannot do what they did in their youth.

The wine passed merrily.

Clara, who was present, gave Mole a small flag which had a red cross on a white ground.

This was the badge of the Geneva society which gives aid to the wounded and is never fired upon.

"For you, Mr. Mole," she exclaimed. "If you can forego your bloodthirsty instincts and cease killing your thousands, you shall bear the Geneva flag."

"Lady," replied Mole, accepting it with a low bow and a bland smile. "I thank you for your kindness."

"In future you will be a non-combatant."

"I promise you."

"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

"Exactly. I will fight no more."

"Not even in imagination?"

"That I cannot help; but if Young Jack is in danger and wants assistance at any time, I am to the fore."

Everyone clapped their hands.

Isaac Mole's sentiment was applauded, for it went home to everyone.

All of them felt that they would be glad to shed the last drop of their blood for Jack Harkaway.

Soon afterwards the party dispersed.

Next day the march to Suakin began.

When the town was reached Jack was married to Clara.

They took passage in the steamer Whiteway Castle for Constantinople.

Harry Girdwood, Mole and Monday accompanied them; also Captain Murphy.

Tom Holt remained in Suakin.

Jack rewarded him handsomely for his services.

The wound Harry received soon healed, though he was lame and had to walk with a stick for a long while.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WRECK OF THE WHITEWAY CASTLE.

"JACK, it is hot."

"Hot! Why, dear boy, it is hotter than the blazes of Tophet."

Young Jack Harkaway removed his hat and mopped his head as he thus replied to Harry Girdwood.

They met on the deck of the Whiteway Castle on the morning after leaving Suakin.

"Never put in such a night in all my life," sighed Harry. "A Turkish bath is nothing to that stuffy stateroom; I really believe the thermometer stood at a hundred and twenty. It is over a hundred and twelve now with the door open."

"Well, it's terrible, Harry, but we've got to make the best of it!"

"We've got to take it as it comes, that's one sure thing. How did Mrs. Harkaway stand it?"

"Oh, Clara is too happy to think or worry about the weather."

"Indeed, I suppose so, and well she may be. Her good fortune in escaping from the clutches of the Mahdi through your brave act is something she ought never to forget."

"I want her to forget it, dear boy! As it is, the thought of those days of suffering and anxiety are maddening, and it makes her so nervous that I beg her to put it all out of her mind."

"She will soon do it, Jack. With you for a husband any woman should be happy."

"There—there! No flattery. See, I must take off my hat to you for that remark."

"Partly because the perspiration is running down your face as though you were standing in a shower bath."

"Isn't it terrible? Ah, here comes old Mole stamping up on deck. Well, professor, how did you pass the night?"

"But indifferently, Jack. It was entirely too hot to sleep. I was looking around for the steward in hopes that I could get a bit of ice."

"To cool your head?"

"Yes."

"You'll wrap it in a cloth, I suppose, and put it in your hat."

Mole eyed Young Jack in disgust.

"Now come, you will have your joke with the old man," he said.

"No, Jack, I am not going to put it in my hat—not by any means. I propose to put it in my stomach, and I think I shall succeed."

"It's as much as your life is worth to put ice in your stomach, professor."

"Not as I shall apply it, Jack."

"Ah, I see."

"It will go down, accompanied by other ingredients, in the form of a mint julep."

"Just so. Beware of these stimulating drinks, old man. Next thing we know we shall have a case of apoplexy on our hands."

Just then Mole caught sight of the steward hurrying across the deck and went stumbling after him.

"Ah, steward! Just a moment!" he called. "I want some ice!"

The words were scarcely spoken when a Lascar, carrying a huge block of ice, came hurrying along in front of Mole.

The professor did not see him, and in his haste inadvertently ran against the man.

The shock caused him to drop the ice, which fell on the foot of Mole's cork leg.

"Confound you for a clumsy fellow!" cried Mole, drawing back.

But the weight of the ice was just enough to hold his cork leg down. It did not come along with the rest of his body.

The result was startling.

All at once Mole went tumbling over backward upon the deck, legless—or rather, a leg less.

The leg remained standing upright on the deck.

Mole swore, and such passengers who witnessed the accident burst into peals of laughter.

"You have your ice now, sir," said the steward. "Anything more I can do for you, sir? If there is give it a name."

"It's a shame! It's an outrage! I'll report this to the captain," sputtered Mole.

"Yah! Yah! Yah! Mass' Mole, you haven't a leg to stand on!" roared Monday, who happened to come along at that moment.

"Lend me a hand, you black rascal!"

"Lend you nuffin! Get de leg yourself," laughed Monday.

But Jack and Harry came to the rescue and restored Mole to his leg, Jack, peremptorily ordering Monday to assist the old man to his stateroom.

"We have too much of this tomfoolery," he said. "Steward, send some ice down to Mr. Mole. Harry, we must get ready for breakfast, and I must go and see if Clara is ready. Do you know I don't like the look of those clouds over there?"

"Do they ever have storms here on the Red Sea?" asked Harry.

"Not rainstorms, but fearful windstorms are by no means uncommon."

"If they are anything like the one we experienced in that oasis near Wady Halfa, I don't want to see a specimen," laughed Harry, as they descended to the cabin.

The party at breakfast was a merry one.

Clara looked positively radiant in spite of the trying weather.

Even Mole developed a good appetite, and was full of his jokes and quaint sayings.

They were just finishing up the meal when all at once there was a great rushing of feet on deck, and the steamer began to roll terribly.

"What now?" cried Mole. "Is this a conspiracy to make us dispose of the breakfast immediately we have eaten it?"

"It's a storm, that's what it is," said Jack. "Harry, my boy, what did I tell you?"

"Your prediction is quite correct," replied Harry. "We'd better get on deck, hadn't we, and see what is going on?"

"Clara, my dear, had you not better retire to the stateroom until it blows over?" asked Jack.

"Not if you are going on deck, Jack. Certainly not. Wherever it is safe for you to go, it is safe for me."

"That's rather dangerous doctrine, I'm afraid," said Jack; "however, we'll go on deck together and see how matters stand."

They were about the only passengers who had the courage to venture on deck.

One of those sudden squalls which oftentimes prove so disastrous on the Red Sea had struck the Whiteway Castle.

The sky was as black as ink.

The wind was blowing from the west a perfect hurricane, carrying with it great clouds of sand from the desert.

It was so dark that to see anything a foot away was next to an impossibility; and yet, let it be remembered that this was only ten o'clock in the morning and the sun was supposed to be somewhere among the dense mass of clouds which overspread the sky.

"This is a bad business!" howled Harry in Jack's ear, as they backed up against the social hall and held on to each other for dear life.

"It will soon pass. Clara, you really must go below."

"Not until you do, Jack."

"But it's dangerous!"

"More than dangerous I should say!" roared Harry. "There's something wrong! Someone has surely lost his head!"

The words were scarcely uttered when a perfect wall of water, towering about the bulwarks, was seen advancing toward the steamer.

"Inside, for your life, Harry!" cried Jack.

He seized Clara around the waist and lifted her bodily into the social hall.

They were not an instant too soon.

The tidal wave—for it was nothing else—struck the Whiteway Castle and had her on her beams ends, sweeping every loose thing off the deck, breaking all the windows of the social hall and forcing the door.

The next Jack, Clara and Harry knew they were lying on their faces, drenched from head to foot.

The roar of the water as it went plunging down into the cabin was awful.

Shrieks, groans and wild cries could be heard on all sides.

All Jack and Clara could do was to hold on to each other and wait.

Soon the shock had passed and the steamer partially righted.

Not as she should have done, however.

Trouble had come.

A strange silence pervaded the deck.

There was no shouting of orders from the bridge.

The big propeller had ceased to revolve.

The steamer seemed to be swinging around in a wild, aimless fashion.

"We're aground," cried Jack.

"Faith an' that's exactly what we are," cried a voice outside, and Captain Murphy, dripping like a drowned rat, came staggering in.

"Sure, Jack, me boy, it's in the soup we are worse than old Pharaoh ever dared to be!" he cried; "an' if you don't believe it come out here and have a look wid yer own two eyes."

It was indeed a bad state of affairs.

The Whiteway Castle had evidently been thrown on some hidden ledge, for she showed no signs of righting.

"Where's the captain? Where's everybody?" demanded Jack, as Murphy stood sputtering and shaking the water off of him like some great dog.

"Sure every mother's son on deck was washed overboard but me," cried Murphy; "and that was done by the first wave that struck her; if I hadn't grabbed hold of one of the davits, I'd have gone, too."

The storm had passed away as suddenly as it came.

Jack and Harry followed Murphy out on deck.

It was all they could do to stand upright.

Not a trace of officers or crew was to be seen.

Evidently an appalling disaster had taken place.

Every moment brought fresh discoveries.

"Where are all the passengers?" cried Harry.

"Yes, why does no one come on deck?" echoed Jack.

"Someone is coming up now," said Clara, who was standing near the door.

It was Monday.

He was dripping from head to foot.

His eyes stood out like two saucers.

He had hold of the collar of Professor Mole's coat and was dragging him up the stairs.

The old man seemed quite limp.

Jack thought he was dead.

"Oh, golly—oh, golly! Are we all killed dead?" gasped Monday as Jack and Harry stooped to lend a helping hand.

"What is it? Where are all the rest of the passengers, Monday?" Jack demanded.

"All gone to de sharks."

"No!"

"Yes, yes, Mass' Jack! Big hole knocked out of de side of de steamer; de water coming in like a house afire. Can't find nobody down dar 'less you dive for 'em. I only cotched Mass' Mole just as he was going down for the last time."

"This is a serious business," said Jack.

"We must work to save ourselves," said Harry.

"Right you are. You and Murphy get one of the life boats ready. I'll see if there are any left alive below."

"I'll go with you, Jack," said Clara.

"No, no! That's madness!" cried Jack. "Stay just where you are! Monday, follow me and we'll see what can be done to save the poor wretches below."

"Tell you dey can't nuffin be done, Mass' Jack!"

"We'll make a try for it anyhow, Monday. I know you are the best swimmer in the world. If there are lives to be saved we want to do it."

They hurried down into the cabin, or rather as near to it as they could get.

It was precisely as Monday had said.

A huge opening in the steamer's side was the first thing Jack saw.

The water was pouring through it.

One glance was sufficient to show Jack that he could do nothing.

There were but few passengers on board.

If any of these were still alive they were not visible.

Jack perceived that the case was hopeless.

The only thing to do was to look to the safety of his wife and his friends.

As to saving any of their effects, that was not to be thought of.

They would have great cause for thankfulness if they escaped with their lives.

"We ain't in it here, Monday," he said. "We'd better get back."

"Dat's a fac', Mass' Jack; an' de sooner de better, too."

"Decidedly. Come on, we shall have to take to the boat without an instant's delay!"

They hurried back on deck.

Captain Murphy and Harry had already got one of the largest life boats ready for lowering.

No difficult task, for the steamer was already very low in the water and was rapidly sinking.

"Anybody alive down there, Jack?" demanded Harry.

"We can't see anybody," replied Jack. "The steamer will be at the bottom of the Red Sea inside of ten minutes."

"It's terrible!" sighed Clara.

"A good time for us to get out unless we want to join Pharaoh's army," said Captain Murphy.

"Where's Mole?" asked Jack.

"In the boat," replied Harry. "He's come to himself and is all right."

"Then we're off. Get in, Clara; you, too, Monday. Harry, you are lame and better go with them. Murphy and I will attend to the lowering of the boat."

When the boat was safely floated, Jack and Captain Murphy jumped down.

They seized the oars and pulled away from the sinking steamer. Not a moment too soon either.

Before they had gone two hundred yards, the Whiteway Castle went down before their eyes.

Young Jack Harkaway's party were the only survivors.

There they were afloat on the Red Sea.

The clouds had all cleared away.

Not a trace of the storm remained.

The broiling sun was beating down upon them.

The disaster had come upon them so suddenly that it was hard to realize it.

Jack looked about him.

The Arabian shore lay four or five miles distant.

They could see high rocky bluffs coming down close to the water's edge.

It seemed a barren, desolate spot, but Jack decided they had better make for it.

No sail was visible, and to remain in the open boat under that terrible sun was something not to be thought of.

So the men threw off their surplus outer garments and began pulling for the shore.

The first real sign of life Mole displayed, outside of opening his eyes and winking, was when he thought they were going to ask him to take an oar.

"Good heavens, Jack!" he cried; "you don't want me to row, do you, dear boy? The fact is, I've swallowed so much salt water that I'm quite sick at my stomach. I'm sure I never could do it in the world."

"Wait till you're asked, professor," laughed Jack. "If you'll only pull yourself together I shall be satisfied."

"I think the pulling process would go on a little faster if you would give me a pull at your brandy flask, dear boy."

"Brandy, with the thermometer at a hundred and fifty! Mole, are you mad!"

"Not by any means, Jack; only thirsty."

"Brandy will be the death of you yet."

"Come near it dis time, Mass' Jack," put in Monday. "When dat dar wave come a-swashin' into de cabin, Boss Mole was just climbing up on de top berth of his stateroom to get a bottle of brandy what he'd hid under de pillow."

"Which was all that saved me, you black rascal," sputtered the professor. "If I'd been on the floor I would have perished like the rest."

"Yah! yah! Didn't I find you on de floor choking in de swash? Might hab sated myself an' neber thought of you. I was half way up-stairs when de shock came."

"Mole, you are called down," said Jack.

"Evidently he owes his life to Monday," said Harry.

"Yes, and not de firstest either," said Monday; "I swar it shall be de last! Next time I'll leave de ole Mole to roast, or bile, or drown, or whatebber it is dat de debbil has put out to catch him with—dat's what I'll do!"

"You've brought it on yourself, professor, and I must say you deserve it," said Jack.

For once Mole gave in handsomely.

"Called down!" he exclaimed. "Well, I acknowledge the corn, boys. Monday, shake hands. I'm your friend from this moment, for you've been my friend, and that's a fact."

So they talked, but while they were talking they pulled steadily toward the shore.

At last they reached it.

The boat was pulled up high on the narrow beach.

Great black rocks towered above them.

The place was lonely and desolate to the last degree.

"So this is Arabia," said Clara. "Really, it is worse than Egypt."

"It's the worst country in the world, so it is," said Captain Murphy. "If we don't starve to death here it will be a wonder."

"Come, come! Let us be hopeful," said Jack. "Some steamer may come in sight before long. It is my purpose to signal it, and they will, no doubt, send a boat to take us off."

Certainly it was the right and proper thing to be hopeful, but before the end of the first hour matters certainly looked gloomy enough. At first there appeared to be no way of getting up to the top of the bluff.

At length, after a long search, a narrow path was discovered, and Jack, Harry and Captain Murphy toiled painfully up to the level.

To their horror and despair they saw stretching out before them, as far as the eye could reach, a sandy desert.

There was neither tree nor shrub; nothing—absolutely nothing.

"Unless we are rescued by some steamer we are lost!" groaned Murphy; "faith, there ain't enough here to kape a bird alive."

And certainly it looked so.

Jack led the way back to Clara in deeper despair than he had known for many years.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TREASURES OF THE CAVE.

"Oh, Jack! Jack! Come here—Jack!"

Young Jack Harkaway, who was sitting under the shadow of the great black cliffs talking to Clara just before the sun went down, thus heard himself called by Mole.

"Wonder what the professor wants now!" he said.

"Jack! Jack! Hurry up! Quick!" called Mole, beckoning from where he stood, perhaps a hundred yards further down the shore.

"You'd better go and see, Jack," said Clara.

"I suppose I had," said Jack. "Dear me, I wonder what new crotchet he's got in his brain now! Coming, Mole! Be with you in a moment!"

So Jack sauntered down to where Mole stood.

"If you knew what a wonderful discovery we had made you'd stir yourself a little livelier," said Mole, as he approached.

"What is your discovery?" called Jack.

"A cave."

"A cave?"

"Yes, a cave. Don't repeat my words like an old poll parrot, for it ain't good manners. Monday has found a cave, and at this very moment Captain Murphy and Harry Girdwood are exploring it. I tell you it is great!"

"In what respect?"

"Regular robbers' cave—Ali Baba business—forty thieves—you know."

"How do I know when I haven't seen it?" said Jack.

"Well, you'll say so when you do see it, then."

"Any reason why Clara shouldn't go with us?"

"None in the world. By all means have her come, dear boy."

Jack beckoned to Clara, who presently joined them.

Then Mole led the way around a projection in the rocks.

Here, by a series of devious turns, he led Jack into a large cavern.

"Goodness, what a gloomy place!" Clara exclaimed.

"It's dark enough in all conscience," said Mole, "but Harry and the others are around here somewhere with torches."

"Torches! Where did they get the torches?" demanded Jack.

"Found them right here," said Mole, stamping around the corner of a projecting rock, and picking up a short stick, to which a round ball of resinous matter was attached.

It blazed like a house afire when he lit it.

There was quite a pile of the torches.

Mole handed Jack one for himself, and one for Clara.

"Light enough now," he said, when they had touched them to his own.

"This is certainly very curious," said Clara, looking around.

"You'll think so when you know all," declared Mole.

"What did you mean by calling it a robbers' cave?" asked Jack.

"Follow me and see!" replied Mole, pompously. "Prepare to be surprised, for I am now about to surprise you."

He led the way through the windings of the cavern.

Before they had gone far they saw light ahead.

Harry, Captain Murphy and Monday were coming toward them.

"Well, well, well! You here, Jack!" cried Harry. "I tell you, dear boy, this is great!"

"Bless my soul, everybody keeps telling me that it's great, but nobody explains wherein or why," said Jack.

"Will my lord Harkaway be pleased to follow me, and he shall be initiated into the secrets of the robbers' cave," said Captain Murphy.

He led the way back through several narrow passages.

Suddenly they came out into a large chamber, from whose dome-shaped roof hung glittering stalactites in a thousand fantastic forms.

"Beautiful!" cried Clara.

"Oh, but you haven't seen it yet," said Harry.

"I alluded to the stalactites."

"Stalactites be—melted!" broke in Captain Murphy.

He pointed to a deep niche in one side of the rocky wall.

Jack and Clara could only exclaim in astonishment.

For really it was very wonderful.

There, standing on the floor of the cave were three strangely carved oaken chests, from which the lids had just been pried off.

One was filled to the brim with gold plate, pitchers, cups, saucers, basins, odd shaped vessels of all sorts.

The next was still more interesting—being filled with coins.

Some were gold, some silver, some copper.

There was a tremendous number of them; all seemed to be very ancient, but as the few which Jack examined were covered with Arabic inscriptions, it was not possible to tell how old they were.

The third chest was filled with clothing of the richest description, but so rotten and frayed that the different articles fell apart as they touched them.

But even in this condition Jack could see that they were immensely valuable, for nearly every article was embroidered with gold lace, and many had diamond buckles attached, or buttons made of rubies and sapphires; the front of one dress was literally covered with pearls and there were many loose gems in the bottom of the box.

"Well, what you say now, Mass' Jack?" cried Monday, rubbing his hands with delight.

"Wonderful!" said Jack.

"Told him it was great, but he wouldn't believe me," said Mole.

"Oh, I was willing enough to believe you, but I couldn't make out what you were driving at," replied Jack.

"But this ain't all," said Murphy; "the best is to come."

"Why, there must be fifty thousand pounds here," said Jack. "Is there more still?"

"This," said the captain, pulling Jack around another rock.

Here lay a long object which at first Jack did not thoroughly comprehend, owing to the gloom.

But as he flashed his torch upon it he saw that it was an ancient galley or ship to be propelled with oars, such as was in common use two thousand years ago.

"There!" cried Mole; "that's it! An ancient Egyptian galley! The only perfect one known. The British Museum would give ten thousand pounds for it. I found it—she's mine!"

And in the height of his exuberation Mole began executing a dance on the floor of the cave.

The result was what might have been expected.

In a moment the worthy professor was minus a leg, for his artificial member stuck in the sand and over went Mole in the usual style, calling lustily to Monday and Harry Girdwood to put him together again, which they promptly did.

But in spite of Mole's eccentricities the find was an exceedingly valuable one.

Jack saw at a glance that the coins were worth far more than their face value.

He knew that they must be very ancient, and that sold either to some museum or some coin dealer they would bring a large premium.

This he explained to Monday.

It wouldn't surprise me at all if we had a hundred thousand pounds value right here," he said; "but tell me, were these chests open so when you found them?"

"Oh, no," replied Harry. "Monday and Mole stumbled on the cave by accident and it was they who pried the lids up."

Of course, this wonderful discovery created the greatest excitement among Young Jack Harkaway's little party.

"But even if the stuff were worth a million pounds what in the world can we do with it?" growled Mole. "Here we are stuck on the Arabian coast with no chance of getting away, and liable to starve to death."

"Quit your croaking, Mole," said Jack. "The situation ain't at all as you describe it; we can leave here any time we like."

"In the life-boat?"

"Yes; or in this boat!"

"That old thing?"

"Why not? I've been examining her; something in the air of this cave has preserved the oakum in her seams. She's as tight as a drum, and I'll bet on it."

"Sure, it would be a great note to go on the Red Sea in an ancient Egyptian galley," laughed Captain Murphy.

"There's nothing to hinder us from trying it," replied Jack. "We couldn't possibly get the chests in the life-boat. I say let's risk it in the morning."

They talked over it further, and determined to try it.

To sleep in the cave was quite impossible owing to the heat, and as not one of the party would hear to the suggestion of losing sight of their valuable discovery, they dragged the chests out to the beach.

The old galley did not come so easy.

But upon looking around, they discovered the rollers on which it was originally moved.

Aided by these, they eventually managed to get the strange old craft to the water's edge.

Then taking turns on the watch, they lay down to sleep.

It was Monday's last watch—from three o'clock till dawn.

About half-past four Jack was awakened by Monday shaking him.

"Wake up, Mass' Jack! Wake up!" he called.

Jack sprang to his feet.

"What is it, Monday?" he demanded, rubbing his eyes.

"Don't want to scare nobody, Mass' Jack, but I hear horses!"

"Bless me, so do I!" said Jack, listening.

"Up above?"

"On the desert—yes."

"Maybe some of them wild Arab fellers, Mass' Jack?"

"Bedouins—yes. Monday, we've got too much at stake to take any chances."

"So I t'ink, Mass' Jack. Bes' t'ing ever we can do is to put to sea at once."

"That's what," said Jack.

He woke up Clara, and Monday aroused Harry, Mole and Captain Murphy.

The sounds which had so disturbed Monday, could still be heard, but they did not seem to come any nearer.

Jack was puzzled.

Still everyone was sure that it was horses.

"We'll float our galley anyhow," he said.

The rollers were put under the keel of the old craft again, and after a few efforts she moved gracefully into the water.

It was now daylight and the appearance presented by the galley was most striking.

It was about forty feet long with high, carved sides, holes through which the oars were worked, and seats for ten rowers.

There was an odd little cabin in the stern, and the bowsprit—if it could be so termed—rose straight to a height of five feet.

It was beautifully carved to represent the neck of a serpent, the head being particularly perfect; the eyes were large and sparkling.

They had supposed them to be made of glass, but upon examination now it was found that each eye was a diamond, worth a fortune in itself.

"She don't leak a drop," said Jack, after they had watched the galley a few moments.

"Let's load in the chests," said Mole.

"Sure an' the sooner the better," cried Captain Murphy. "Whoever them fellers are up on the desert, they are coming nearer now."

They had scarcely got the chests on board when a wild shout was heard on the top of the bluffs.

"Bedouins! No mistake this time," said Jack.

The words were hardly uttered when they saw a large company of mounted men come into view perhaps half a mile to the northward.

In that clear, pure atmosphere the sound of their horses' hoofs as they rode over the rocks had been heard a long distance.

Bedouins they certainly were.

As they caught sight of Young Jack's party they dashed furiously forward, brandishing their long spears and yelling as only an Arab can yell.

"We're in for it now!" exclaimed Jack. "We've either got to get out of this or fight!"

"Then let's git, by all means!" cried Captain Murphy.

"Yes; let us not stand on the order of our going, but go," said Mole, as he hastily scrambled on board the galley in advance of the rest.

Jack lifted Clara in.

Mole had already taken refuge in the cabin, where Clara joined him.

The others hastily took their places on the rowers' benches and the ancient sweeps were run out.

The advancing Bedouins saw their prey escaping them and yelled the louder.

Then suddenly they threw up their old gun and opened fire.

"Come, come! This won't do," cried Jack. "Give 'em something to remember us by, boys, before we light out of here."

Fortunately they had saved their Winchesters.

These were now turned on the Bedouins.

Perhaps a dozen shots were fired before they lowered the guns.

Nearly every shot seemed to tell.

Bedouin after Bedouin was unhorsed.

Some lay where they fell, evidently dead; others scrambled up and crawled away.

All at once the whole band, seeing that they were getting the worst of it, gave a parting yell, wheeled their horses around and went galloping away.

"They've given it up as a bad job," cried Harry.

"Now's our time to light out with the treasure," said Captain Murphy. "Let her go, boys!"

So they all pulled at the oars, even Monday lending a hand.

The ancient ship floated off over the Red Sea like some strange sea monster.

It was really surprising how easily she was propelled and what good time she made.

"By gracious, these old galleys were not such tubs after all," said Harry.

"Not by any means," declared Jack. "Remember that in old times no other style of craft was in use on the Red Sea."

"No reason why we should not go through to Port Said in her all right," said Harry.

"None in the world, providing we were provisioned," replied Jack.

But this was just the trouble.

All hands were half dead with hunger, and choking for water.

But everyone took particular pride in concealing his sufferings.

Even Clara had not allowed a murmur to escape her.

Jack's pretty wife now came out of the cabin and stood in the bow of the galley, watching the cutwater as they plowed along.

Thus it happened that Clara was the first to discover the big steamer of the Peninsula and Oriental Line as it turned a promontory and came into full view.

She gave a joyous cry, which immediately became a shout when taken up by the others.

Signals were run up and seen.

Before long they were on the deck of the big Indiaman with the galley in tow, and the treasure chests safe in the purser's hand.

Of course their rescue created the greatest excitement among the officers and passengers, as well as the news they brought of the loss of the Whiteway Castle.

But Jack was patient, and the passengers grew tired of asking questions before he was of answering them.

At last they reached Constantinople.

Here Jack disposed of the ancient galley and the contents of the treasure chests for an enormous sum.

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[THE END.]

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